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Steamtrain rat finds a body



103 2 7

Chapter 1 by Selena Rayne

Zoye was 9 when her parents sold her into slavery for money to pay off their debts; she was 11 when she managed to run away from her master. Now at 12 she's living her life as a train rat, travelling around the continent in cargo holds of huge steam trains, the only means of transportation through the waste rocky deserts of her homeland.

This time she wasn't lucky enough and got shut in the hold with inanimate cargo, risking death from dehydration. However, when you're sneaking on the train instead of buying a ticket, you're not the one to ask for comfort.

After three days of unbearable heat, Zoye managed to sneak past guards that came to look for something in the cargo hold. Desperate to find water and maybe food, she climbed up to passenger decks of the train that are mostly deserted at night.

Darkness as her ally, Zoye silently walks the deck in search of leftover water and food on empty delivery trays left on the hallway floor. She found some milk and some cake, but she's not full yet. She has to keep going until she'll be able to hole up in her cargo hold again.

Then she finds a pocket knife on the floor. She can't believe she's unlocked the last tempting reward.

By the end of the day, she's still not full, but she's spent some time exploring in the meantime. She's not sure if she'll be able to find a meal, but she's already on the road.

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A young girl, not much older than Zoye, in rich clothes and made up aristocratically. There's a stab wound in her chest, right at heart mark, but no weapon nearby.

Zoye wonders, why there's no chaperone or a guard to accompany such a rich young lady?

She opens a window to have an escape route (just in case) and resumes her search. She finds no money or jewels, only travel papers in the name of Mathilda Thatterey with one all-inclusive ticket to the last stop of the train, Darkha, and some documents in lawyers' language Zoye can't understand.

She sits near the body and ponders, temptations looming one after another. In the end, much closer to sunrise than she'd like, Zoye acts on her plan. She throws Mathilda's body off the train from the window (rolling it into the heavy blanket and securing it with girl's own belts). She waits half an hour, ready to bolt at any second, but no one comes, no one notices. The train is too huge and too noisy and security guards are too laid-back.

Zoye smiles to herself: she's free to execute another part of her plan.

Chapter 2 by Héctor Nevulos Sciitio



The second and more important part of the plan. Taking advantage of her resembrace with the girl, she dressed up and go to the restaurant wagon. Hungry was over for her, at least for that night.

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